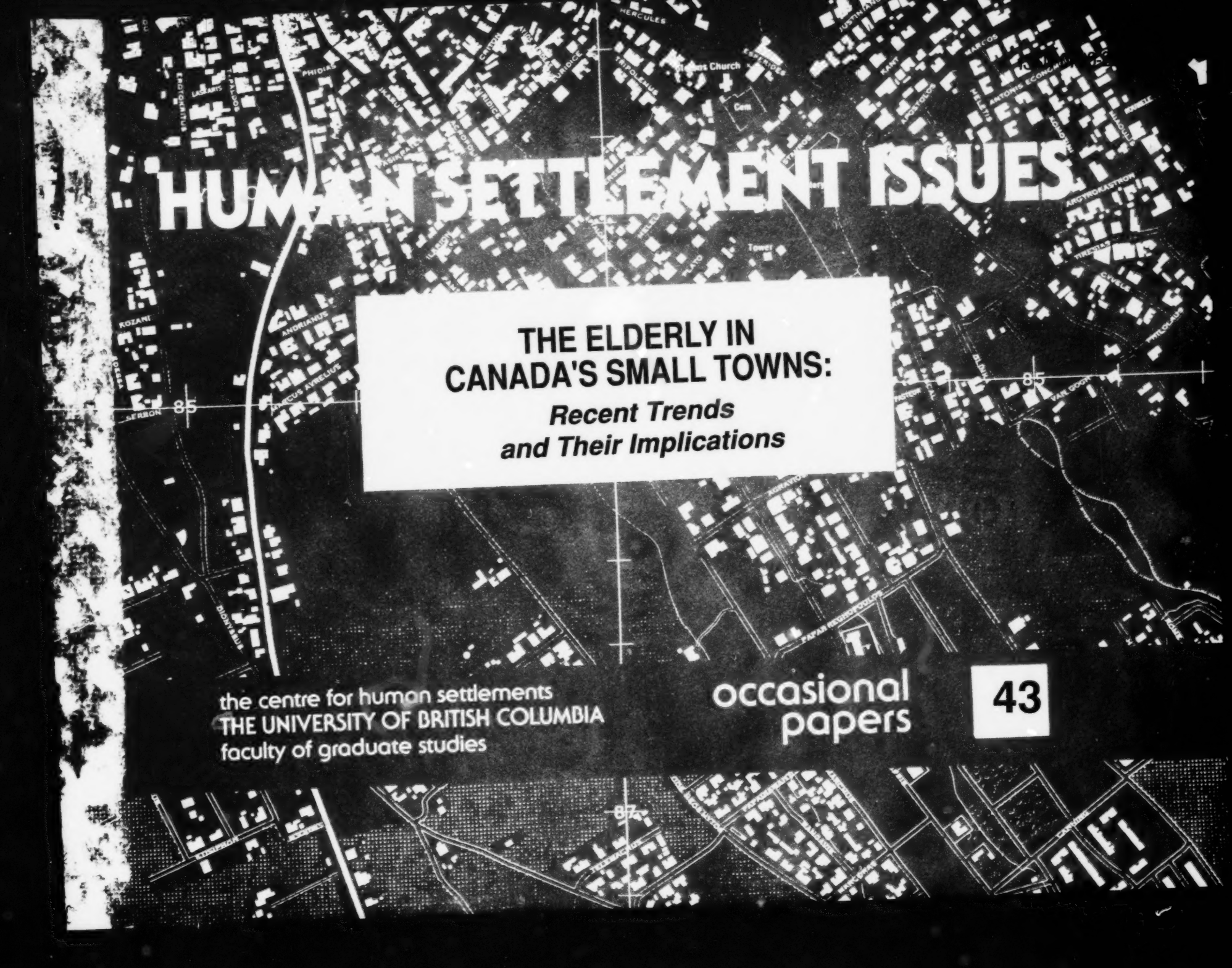

THE ELDERLY IN CANADA'S SMALL TOWNS:

Recent Trends and Their Implications

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THE ELDERLY IN CANADA'S SMALL TOWNS: Recent Trends and Their Implications

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PREFACE

Canada's demographic trends have recently shown some unexpected and startling changes. It is clear and widely accepted that Canadians are fast aging and that the elderly represent an increasing proportion of the total population. What is less clear and deserves thorough and continuing research and analysis is how these trends affect size, shape and growth rates of settlements across the network of communities. it appears that towns and villages, as distinct from larger cities, are increasingly the choice of residence of seniors.

Dr. Gerald Hodge, the former Director of the School of Urban and Regional Planning, Queens University, has been a leading academic probing these trends and linking the nature of small towns with the residential mobility of seniors. In 1983 he co-authored a volume on "Towns and Villages in Canada" and has since pursued these issues as Scholar in Residence at the UBC Centre for Human Settlements.

While it is clear from a broad scale survey that smaller communities in Canada have a substantially higher proportion of the elderly population (those over 55 years of age) than do cities, both the causes and effects have not been established or conclusively analysed. Of particular significance is the impact of these trends on the supply and availability of services appropriately designed for the needs of the elderly. In this context housing, together with social and cultural services for the elderly in towns and villages, are already perceived as meagre. Providing appropriate facilities and programmes in the social, cultural, and medical field for small settlements is unusually difficult. Little is known about the trends of the elderly population and their locational preferences across Canada or within particularly attractive geographic regions. It has surprised some that towns and villages generally have persisted across Canada during the post war decades and are even growing moderately in most Provinces. It appears that the elderly are choosing small towns in greater numbers and that the lament of two or three decades ago that the elderly had to leave rural areas may be replaced with one that is concerned with providing them with a satisfactory environment there.

Those concerned with providing appropriate services for the elderly are increasingly certain that it is both more socially satisfying and more economic to bring the service to the elderly than to move where services are more readily available.

These issues were discussed at length during two Invitational Seminars convened during 1986 by the UBC Centre for Human Settlements. At that time a series of leading academics and professionals reviewed current demographic trends of elderly in small towns by Dr. Hodge, and analysed specific programmes and policies designed to assist the elderly in British Columbia. These two seminars and further extensive research, have led to the preparation of the present Occasional Paper.

Dr. Hodge sheds new light on Canadian trends and the options available to the elderly in moving or remaining in communities of their choice. There is considerable mobility among elderly between cities and towns, all pointing towards the small community as a preferred environment, depending on the availability of appropriate services, particularly housing.

Dr. Hodge's career spans three decades of professional and academic work including degrees from UBC, University of California at Berkeley, and his Ph.D. from MIT. The UBC Centre for Human Settlements has been privileged to have Dr. Hodge pursue these issues in the context of its own agenda, and considers the current publication as a significant contribution to understanding relationships between seniors and small towns while clarifying recent demographic trends and their implications for shelter and services. The production of this publication has had the benefit of Dr. Knute Buttedahl's management and skillful oversight. It is the Centre's intention to continue to pursue research in this area and develop a more detailed and precise insight into cause and effect between choice and preference of the elderly living in small towns.

H. Peter Oberlander
Director
Centre for Human Settlements

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

This project has been made possible by the generous support of the Centre for Human Settlements and, especially, Dr. H. Peter Oberlander, its Director, who recognized its cogency to contemporary demographic and settlement patterns in Canada. Staff of the Centre, notably Dr. Knute Buttedahl and Shirley Marcus, provided much assistance in the conduct of the research and preparing the report. During the course of the project the Centre held two seminars on the subject of the rural elderly. My appreciation is hereby given to the score or more senior citizens, academics, and professionals who attended and whose incisive observations and suggestions aided me in structuring the research. And without the skills of Dr. John B. Collins in penetrating the census tapes and patience in responding to requests for numerous variations in the data output the report would not have reached this stage.

None of these contributors is, of course, responsible for the words and interpretations that appear on these pages. All the content, including the errors of omission and commission, is my responsibility.

Gerald Hodge
July 1987

1. INTRODUCTION

That Canada's population is fast aging, like that of other developed countries, is a well-known topic for our media, our legislatures, and for many of our professions. Victoria and White Rock, British Columbia, already have national reputations as havens for the elderly and many cities are gearing up with housing and facilities for senior citizens. Generally overlooked in the popular perspective is that most elderly people in Canada are 'aging in place', not only in their own homes but in their home towns and rural communities.

This paper examines the fact that small towns in Canada (those under 10,000 population) are home to much higher proportions of the elderly than any other form of habitat. Places like Murray Harbour, PEI; Athens, Ontario; Minnedosa, Manitoba; and Oliver, B.C., have as high proportions of the elderly as more well-known retirement centres. The aim is to document this phenomenon and to describe its recent trends in terms of several indicators: age structure, male-female ratios, and mobility. With this we shall be able to establish the extent of the elderly in small towns and several of its major demographic characteristics. Further, we shall determine whether all small towns are so affected. For example, are all sizes of small towns equally attractive to seniors? and in all provinces? Before examining the situation of the elderly in small towns, it will be helpful to place the analysis in a fuller perspective of the scope of small town development in Canada in the 1980s. The contemporary small town habitat is described in the next section of the paper and this will provide a clearer sense of the environment in which many elderly are choosing to live. This much we know: the existence of and quality of facilities and services for living differ with different types of habitat. Ultimately, this paper poses the question of whether small town environments are equal to the demands and needs of the elderly. The responses of some rural communities in Canada to this question comprise the final section of the paper.

2. THE SMALL TOWN HABITAT

Villages and towns have always been an important part of the settlement fabric of Canada. From the earliest Newfoundland fishing villages to the trading posts of the interior, and the grain towns, mine towns, and mill towns, small centres provided the foundations for today's array of cities and towns. Today, there are about 9,200 towns and villages in Canada and one-fifth of the nation's population -- about 5 million -- lives in them. Add to that fact the persistence of small centres in this urbanized country, despite the dire predictions of the popular and academic literature of 25 years ago that the "handwriting is on the wall" for most small towns. Yet, as we shall see, between 1961 and 1981 over half actually increased their populations.

No single reason seems to account for this resurgence of small towns (cf., Hodge and Qadeer, 1983). However, it is important that we grasp the scope of small town development. For these places are providing a major contextual element in the lives of many elderly Canadians. The futures of both are entwined. Thus the more we understand about small town trends the more we will be able to appreciate the prospects for the elderly in our regions.

Small Towns in Rural Canada

Small towns are integral parts of rural regions of Canada. Towns and villages have a symbiotic relationship with the area, the people, and the activities in their locale. They are the centre for economic and social communities: they provide goods and services for those engaged in natural resource industries, their families, and the residents of small towns themselves; and they provide a focus for community activities. These town-countryside relations are prominent even in towns situated in the fringes of metropolitan areas. Small town development, therefore, should be seen within the context of rural development.

The two decades from 1961 to 1981 witnessed dramatic changes in rural Canada. First, the twin forces of technological improvement in primary industries and labour shortages in cities contributed to a large outflow of people from farming, fishing, forestry, and mining areas. Over one million

people left farming areas in this period, for example. Second, after several decades of decline, the countryside population burgeoned. People began to flock to the fringes of cities and towns, to recreation regions, and to open country settings throughout Canada: nearly 1.5 million new people were attracted there. Third, small towns saw fewer residents migrate to cities and more newcomers move in. Small town ranks were enlarged by 1.2 million people in this period (Table 1).

TABLE 1: POPULATION CHANGES IN RURAL CANADA, 1961-1981

	POPULATION (000s)			AVG. ANNUAL % CHANGE	
	1961	1971	1981	1961-71	1971-81
TOTAL RURAL[1]					
Number	7,439	7,557	9,118	0.1	2.1
% Canada	40.7	35.3	37.5		
Rural Farm	2,073	1,420	1,039	-3.1	-2.7
Rural Countryside[2]	1,661	1,946	3,098	1.7	5.9
Small Towns[3]	3,705	4,191	4,981	1.3	1.9
TOTAL CANADA	18,238	21,569	24,343	1.8	1.3

Source: Census of Canada

Notes: 1. Includes the population of all towns and villages between 1,000 and 10,000 population in addition to populations defined as rural in the census.

2. Estimated by subtracting the population of all towns and villages with less than 1,000 population from the total rural non-farm.

3. Includes all towns and villages (incorporated and unincorporated with populations under 10,000.

The net result of these population flows is that rural Canada in 1981 was larger by 1.7 million inhabitants than it was 20 years earlier. This change was most pronounced after 1971 when small towns grew 45% faster than the country as a whole and countryside populations grew four times faster. Further, after 1976, the farm population halted its long decline and edged upward. The future of small towns, thus, seems assured by these rural demographic tendencies.

The Scope of Small Town Development

There are about 9,200 towns and villages in Canada compared to less than 200 small and medium-size cities and metropolises. They are, by far, our most numerous settlements, as they are in every country. In 1981, just under 5 million called small towns home. As Table 2 shows, this represents an addition of 1,276,000 people since 1961, or a growth rate of 34 percent.

TABLE 2: CHANGES IN THE POPULATION LIVING IN SMALL TOWNS, 1961-1981

	Total Population	Change in Numbers	Average Annual Percent Change
1961	3,704,711	--	--
1966	3,972,970	268,259	1.4
1971	4,191,194	218,224	1.1
1976	4,486,971	295,777	1.4
1981	4,980,668	493,697	2.2
1961-1981	--	1,275,957	1.7

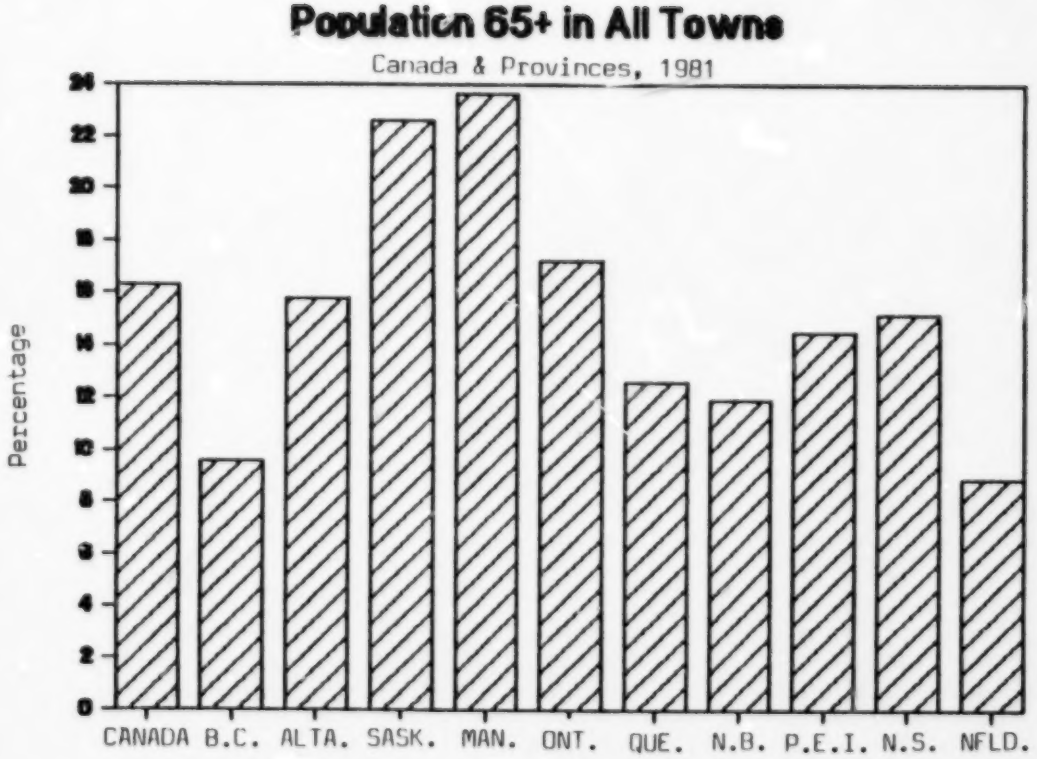
Source: Census of Canada

Canada's small towns are a pervasive form of settlement. In broad terms, the total of 9,200 is the equivalent of one small town for every 100 square miles (1/259 km^2) in the settled southern portion of the country. Or, put another way, they are to be found about 10 miles apart (16 km) on the average. In size they average 543 persons, although that average varies among the provinces reflecting their respective settlement patterns and natural resource endowments (Table 3). There are several hundred small towns in each province. Even Prince Edward Island has nearly 400 within its modest 3,000 square miles (7,770 km^2); while Ontario, the most urbanized province, has over 1,700. These totals represent relatively dense sets of small centres and reflect the settlement tendencies of the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries when rural populations were much less mobile than today. Although the raison d'etre for town spacing and many of the original economic functions have vanished, the communities remain. It is likely that there are about as many small towns today as there were sixty years ago at the end of Canada's major settlement period.

TABLE 3: NUMBER AND POPULATION OF CANADIAN SMALL TOWNS BY PROVINCE, 1981

	Number	Average Population	Percentage of Population in Towns
British Columbia[1]	691	831	20.9
Alberta	524	1020	23.8
Saskatchewan	646	452	30.0
Manitoba	347	537	18.2
Ontario	1735	740	14.9
Quebec	1637	1005	25.6
New Brunswick	1082	232	35.6
Nova Scotia	1515	295	52.5
Prince Edward Island	396	211	68.6
Newfoundland	597	500	52.6
CANADA	9170	543	20.5

Source: Census of Canada
Note: 1. Includes approximately 100 towns in the Yukon and Northwest Territories.


Population 65+ in All Towns
Canada & Provinces, 1981
Percentage
0
2
4
6
8
10
12
14
16
18
20
22
24
CANADA
B.C.
ALTA.
SASK.
MAN.
ONT.
QUE.
N.B.
P.E.I.
N.S.
NFLD.

One-fifth of Canada's population lives in small towns. Only two provinces, Manitoba and Ontario, have proportions less than that and five provinces had 30 percent or more of their population in small towns. Further, in all provinces the percentage of small town population increased between 1976 and 1981. This indicates that small towns grew faster in this period than did the total population of their respective provinces. The same is true for Canada as a whole, again confirming small town viability.

Most small towns are quite small in population size. Three-quarters have fewer than 500 residents and these places account for just under one-quarter of the small town population. On the other hand, two-thirds of town and village residents live in places of 1,000 or more. The size distribution of towns varies somewhat among provinces. The Atlantic Region provinces have larger proportions of small centres and fewer large towns. Ontario and Quebec's distribution tends toward more larger towns, while the western provinces parallel the national profile (Table 4).

TABLE 4: POPULATION DISTRIBUTION AND GROWTH OF DIFFERENT SIZE SMALL TOWNS, CANADA, 1976-1981

Population Size	Percent of Towns 1981	Percent Population 1981	Percent Change 1976-1981	Percent Growing 1976-1981
500 or less	76.9	22.1	-2.0	53.3
501 - 1,000	11.1	13.1	6.4	66.8
1,001 - 2,500	6.9	17.9	6.0	72.1
2,501 - 5,000	3.0	18.4	9.9	71.3
5,001 -10,000	2.1	28.5	24.7	74.3
ALL TOWNS	100.0	100.0	11.0	55.1

Source: Census of Canada

Small Town Growth Tendencies

In the two decades prior to 1961, small town populations grew hardly at all. Since then, on the average, they have grown at a modest, but constant rate (1.5 percent per year) that rivals the growth of cities in the same period. While the average growth rate experienced by small towns was 30 percent from 1961-1981, the median growth rate was only about five percent. This difference reflects the diversity of patterns of growth and decline among small centres. For example, Table 5 shows that one-fifth of all towns experienced very high growth of over 50 percent; at the same time, nearly half that many declined at a very high rate. Captured in these statistics are the experiences of frontier boom towns like Fort MacMurray, Alberta, and declining agricultural centres like Ameliasburgh, Ontario.

TABLE 5: DISTRIBUTION OF POPULATION GROWTH RATES, 1961-1981

Percentage Change 1961 - 1981	Percentage of Towns Absolute	Cumulative
Over 50.0	21.0	21.0
40.0 to 50.0	3.9	24.9
30.0 to 40.0	4.9	29.8
20.0 to 30.0	6.3	36.1
10.0 to 20.0	7.7	43.8
5.0 to 10.0	4.1	47.9
0.0 to 5.0 GROWTH	4.9	52.8
0.0 to -5.0 DECLINE	3.8	37.8
-5.0 to -10.0	4.9	62.7
-10.0 to -20.0	9.6	72.3
-20.0 to -30.0	7.8	80.1
-30.0 to -40.0	6.5	86.6
-40.0 to -50.0	4.8	91.4
Over -50.0	8.6	100.0

Source: Census of Canada

It should not be construed that only resource towns are mushrooming and agricultural centres are declining precipitously. Indeed, within each of these types of settlements there are those that are rapidly growing and rapidly declining. The grain growing town of Bassano, Alberta, grew by nearly 50 percent and the Quebec frontier town of Malartic declined by over 30 percent, for example. Towns within commuting range of metropolitan centres (within about 35 miles or 60 km) also have very high growth rates on average, such as Wetaskiwin, Alberta. However, not all such places are growing, as witness Sooke, B.C. Some towns in 'high amenity' regions, such as B.C.'s Okanagan Valley and New Brunswick's Bay of Fundy area, are growing fast while some are declining. To repeat, there is diversity in the growth patterns of small towns within towns of the same size, province, and economic orientation.

There are, nevertheless, a number of common demographic tendencies that are useful in assessing the performance and prospects for small towns:

1. Population growth is more prevalent than decline in small towns as a whole from 1961-1981;

2. Rates of population growth or decline tend to be modest with over half the towns experiencing rates between +15 and -15 percent over the two decades;

3. The larger the town the more likely it was to add population and centres with less than 500 residents were most prone to decline;

4. Small centres (500 or less) have greater fluctuations in population than larger centres (2,500 or more), as do those places that are growing fastest or declining fastest;

5. Small towns within commuting radius (30 miles or 50 km) of a metropolitan centre grow at a much higher rate (4-5 times) than small towns elsewhere and a greater proportion (about 70 percent) grow;

6. Small towns in Alberta and British Columbia on average experience faster growth in population than in other provinces with small towns in the Atlantic Regions having the greatest tendency to decline.

Using population changes as the measure of small town vitality is the most important measure, because it relates to community, but it is not the only indicator. On the economic side is the vitality of the local business sector and on the physical side is the growth of housing. It will be helpful to examine growth tendencies in these other sectors to determine how small town persistence is being expressed.

Resurgence in Housing and Local Business

The general picture for small towns in Canada is that both housing and local business experienced substantial growth in the 1971-1981 decade. A comparison of their growth rates with that of population for the same period is shown in Table 6 for different sizes of centres. It can be seen that towns and villages have been experiencing higher rates of growth in housing than in population in all sizes of place. The most likely reason for this is the increase in small size households, just as cities are experiencing. In small towns, the smaller households tend to be retirees. Local business growth was also vigorous in this period: over 80 percent of centres added new commercial establishments. The average growth in numbers of new retail outlets was nearly 33 percent and for all types of commercial firms was about 41 percent. The latter finding reveals that towns and villages are adding new wholesale and service firms as well as retail businesses.

Among the various regions of Canada, the growth in housing and commercial firms was higher than in population in all regions. There is, however, considerable variability in the growth rates in the different regions. The latter reflects differences among individual centres, with some seeing their stores grow faster than their population or housing stock, etc. Indeed, the degree of association between any of the pairs of growth indicators is quite low ($r = 0.3$) which signifies several possibilities for small town growth. First, growth may be "shared" among centres within the rural locale with some receiving the shopping outlets and others the housing, and so forth. Second, depending upon the age structure of the growing population, the effects may differ regarding housing needs and types of businesses. Third, a community may possess an excess of housing or under-utilized stores and not need to expand even if demand increases. Fourth, some of the new demand for housing and services is due to much improved rural incomes in the past 25 years.

TABLE 6: GROWTH IN POPULATION, HOUSING, AND COMMERCIAL ESTABLISHMENTS IN CANADIAN SMALL TOWNS, 1971-1981

Population Size	Percent Change 1971-1981 Population	Dwellings	Percent Adding Commercial Establishments 1971-1981
1,000 or less	14.3	40.4	80.0
1,001 - 2,500	20.4	37.9	79.3
2,500 - 5,000	18.5	45.0	90.8
5,001 -10,000	8.8	40.3	93.3
ALL TOWNS	16.7	41.3	84.6

Source: Hodge and Qadeer, 1983

Town and village persistence is variously bound up with new growth, redevelopment of old resources, and a transformation in population. The variability of actual rates of change that individual centres experience represents their separate capacities to absorb change as well as conditions existing in their own local areas. Nevertheless, the buoyant growth rates in population, housing, and local business bode well for small towns. This, then, is the type of habitat for which senior citizens are opting in large numbers -- small, yet viable from an economic and physical point of view. Whether the influx of the elderly will change that perspective, or whether they will find it meets their needs, are the questions we will pursue in subsequent sections of this report.

The Small Town Research Problem

The study of most aspects of small towns is more difficult than is the case for analogous studies of cities. For one, the scale of analysis is

considerably larger if one undertakes to study small towns -- about 9,200 small towns compared to about 175 cities. But, more importantly, the data do not exist in as systematic a way for towns as they do for cities. All cities and metropolitan areas have clear designations within the Census and the full range of demographic data are available for them. Such is not the case for small towns. For those that are incorporated municipalities (only about 1,800 of the 9,200) data arrays the same as cities can be obtained. For the remainder of towns only simple population counts are given; all their other population, labour force, migration, housing, and income characteristics are grouped with the "Rural Non-farm" category of their respective province or census divisions. Yet another difficulty is the changing definition by which small centres are included in the "Urban" category. Data for 1981 include all towns of over 1,000 whether or not they are incorporated, whereas in the 1971 and earlier censuses municipal incorporation was the criterion.

In short, there are two basic difficulties in broad scale small town research in Canada. The first is that for a full array of census demographic data one must resort to a 'sample' using the 1,800 or so incorporated towns. The second is that comparisons between towns and other types of settlements -- cities, farms, the countryside -- are often not possible, or at least not fully reliable. For example, in Table 7, the 'Small Towns' group changes in definition from one census period to another and many small towns are also included in the 'Rural Non-farm' category.

The data in Tables 1 - 5 for small towns are based on the total of 9,200 centres and represents a unique categorization. It includes all places, incorporated and unincorporated, with less than 10,000 population. It is estimated to include at least 97 percent of all towns and villages in the country. The size groups used are the same as in the census and for 1981 are somewhat comparable, but less so for previous censuses. Regrettably, this disjuncture is necessary if one wants to preserve the integrity of the group of Canadian towns and villages in analyses.

The data in Table 6 on local business and housing growth are from yet another sample. One hundred centres from across Canada comprise this sample which is used because the data for these variables are even less accessible than those from the census. From Table 8 onwards, the data are derived from a defined list of incorporated cities, towns, and villages, as defined from province to province. The basic list is for 1971 and

performance of centres is tracked to 1981. Due to municipal amalgamations, consolidations under regional governments, and disincorporations there are fewer centres in 1981 than were identified in 1971. Data in these tables are, thus, from the 'census subdivision sample' alluded to above. The major difference between it and the total of all small places is that the sample contains, proportionately, fewer places under 500 population and a greater representation of centres in the three Prairie provinces. These various characteristics need to be taken into consideration when reviewing the analytical results in the next two parts of this report.

3. THE ELDERLY IN SMALL TOWNS

Two decades ago, it was quite common for elderly people in Canada's small towns and rural areas to bemoan the fact that they would have little choice but to move to the city when they retired. That is not the case today to judge by the data from recent censuses. For a variety of reasons, which still must be ascertained, the elderly are living in small towns, nowadays. Moreover, their presence in small centres amounts to a higher proportion of the population than in any other settlement type. In 1981, of the people living in centres between 1,000 and 5,000 population, one-seventh were over 65 on average (Canada, 1984). This compares with less than one in ten seniors in large cities.

It is important to note that the statistics arrayed in this part of the report represent choices the elderly have already made about where to live. Thus, we are codifying their inclinations and decisions that are just coming to be captured in census data. Beyond describing the outcome of seniors' choices one can determine who are the elderly choosing small towns and the strength of these tendencies: are they the same for all sizes of towns? all regions? all age groups? both men and women? and so forth. The sections that follow examine these various facets of the elderly in small towns.

Their Propensity for Small Towns

Of the 2.3 million persons over 65 in Canada in 1981, over 800,000 lived in small towns and rural areas. Only those seniors living in large cities

comprised a larger number (Table 7). This means about 35 percent of Canada's elderly are rural dwellers. While the elderly on farms have been decreasing in both numbers and proportion since 1961, the elderly in towns and villages have been increasing at a rate equal to the growth of the elderly in the nation as a whole.

The proportion of the elderly in a small town's population, on average, have not only exceeded the national average in each census since 1961, but the difference between the towns and the nation has also increased. Only the recent growth in the proportion of the elderly in small and medium-size cities is comparable. All in all, these data indicate that senior citizens are more inclined to choose either small towns or cities than open country settings in which to spend their retirement years.

TABLE 7: GROWTH IN THE ELDERLY POPULATION IN DIFFERENT SETTLEMENT TYPES IN CANADA, 1961-1981

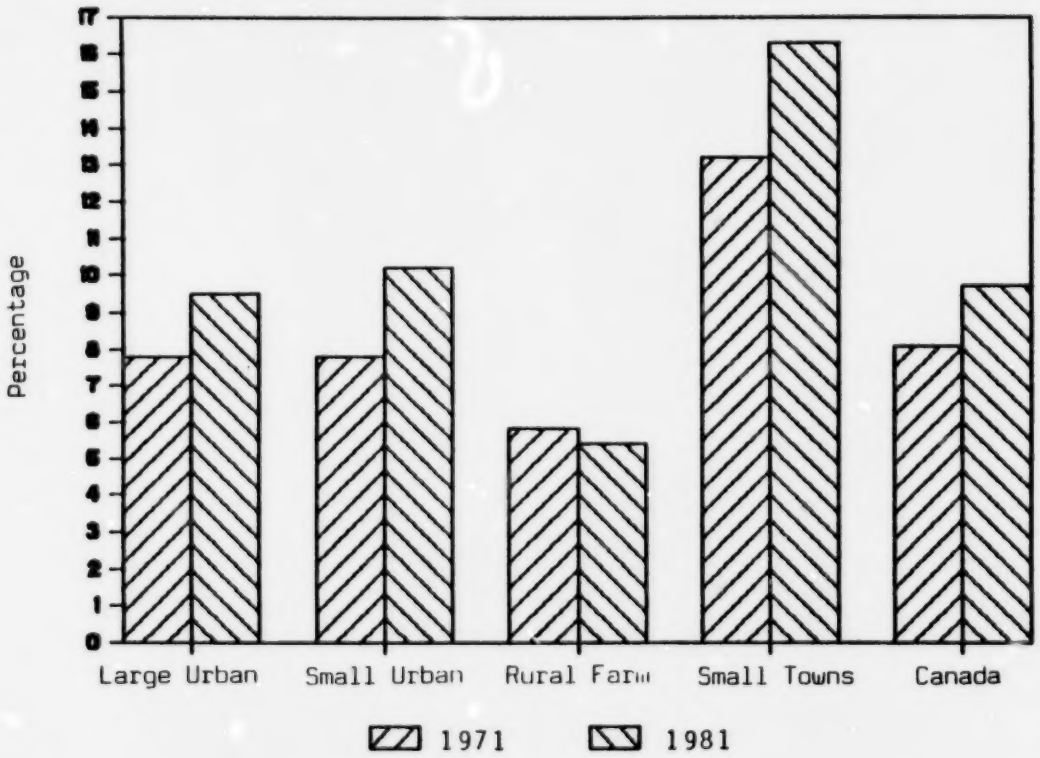
Settlement Type	Population Over 65 (000s) 1961	1971	1981	Percent Over 65 Years 1961	1971	1981
Large Urban[1]	594.3	799.2	1,196.3	7.5	7.8	9.5
Small Urban[2]	195.5	287.0	361.8	7.1	7.8	10.2
Small Towns[3]	177.8	234.6	285.5	8.8	9.4	12.5
Rural Farm	134.7	82.4	56.1	6.5	5.8	5.4
Rural Non-Farm	288.7	340.9	461.6	8.3	9.1	9.5
CANADA	1,391.0	1,744.1	2,361.3	7.6	8.1	9.7

Source: Census of Canada

Notes: 1. Cities over 100,000 population.
2. Cities between 10,000 and 99,999 population.
3. Towns and Villages between 1,000 and 9,999 population.

Population 65+ by Settlement Type

Canada 1971 and 1981



This propensity for small towns is more vivid when the sample of incorporated towns of all sizes is examined. These data show that 13.2 percent of small town populations were over 65 in 1971 and this grew to over 16 percent by 1981. Further, about 70 percent of small towns exceeded the national average in both census years. These higher proportions are due to the inclusion in the sample of centres under 1,000 in population where, proportionately, more seniors are found than in larger towns. We now turn to a fuller discussion of this tendency.

The Size and Location of Towns they Prefer

As noted above, the elderly prefer the smallest small towns for their habitat. In 1971, in towns of 500 and less, every sixth person was a senior citizen; by 1981 this proportion grew to every fifth person being over 65 (Table 8). This is more than double the national average! As one moves successively to larger sizes of towns the ratio of seniors decreases so that in centres between 5,000 and 10,000 the share of the elderly approximates the national average (but still exceeds it). However, the share of the elderly increased in each size of town between the two censuses.

This negative relationship between the proportion of elderly and size of town -- the smaller the town the greater the proportion of seniors -- is found in all regions of Canada. A few examples from the various regions of the country will help to illustrate this. The 1981 population of the town is given along with its proportion of residents over 65.

Murray Harbour, PEI	415	27.7%
Annapolis Royal, NS	595	19.3%
Brussels, Ont.	860	18.0%
Greenwood, BC	820	16.5%
Bassano, Alta	1080	16.2%
Berwick, NS	1515	17.8%
Sainte-Thecle, PQ	1480	13.2%
Beausejour, Man.	2260	23.5%
Brighton, Ont.	2955	16.1%
Hope, B.C.	3840	12.4%
Dalhousie, NB	4590	11.6%
Lacombe, Alta	4890	13.2%

Espanola, Ont.	5315	9.1%
North Sydney, NS	7200	11.3%
Courtenay, BC	8885	10.9%

This brief listing bears out the strong preference of seniors for the smallest centres in all provinces and this is also evident in the provincial distributions in Table 8. The listing shows, too, the rather distinct shift in towns over 5,000 population: although generally higher than the national average of seniors, they are noticeably below that of smaller towns. The most likely reason is that larger towns have more diversified economies and social systems involving a wide range of people- - they are more like cities in many ways including their population age structures.

Two provinces, Newfoundland and British Columbia, do not conform to the population size relationship with seniors. The reason for this appears to be the much larger number of small, isolated resource towns in the arrays of centres for each of these provinces. Such places, typically, have a younger working age population. This tendency for resource towns to have a smaller share of persons over 65 is also found in other provinces: eg: Hinton, Alberta - 2.5%, and Ferme Nueve, Quebec - 8.9%. However, given the greater variety of small town economies in other provinces the effect on their overall age distribution is not apparent.

Another kind of regional difference in the small town elderly population is evident in these data. The strongly agricultural provinces -- Alberta, Saskatchewan,, Manitoba, Ontario, and Prince Edward Island -- all have very high proportions of the elderly in their small towns, especially the smallest ones. Indeed, as of 1981, in towns less than 1,000 population in Saskatchewan and Manitoba, every fourth person was over 65! These two provinces led all the provinces in small town elderly in 1981, as they did in 1971. This is, thus, not a passing phenomenon. It is another clear indication that a large proportion of the rural elderly choose to 'age in place' in their own locale. Further, given the rigourous climate of the Prairie region it belies the conventional wisdom that the elderly are seeking 'sunnier climes' for retirement.

TABLE 8: PROPORTION OF THE ELDERLY IN DIFFERENT SIZE TOWNS, CANADA AND THE PROVINCES, 1971, 1981
(% over 65)

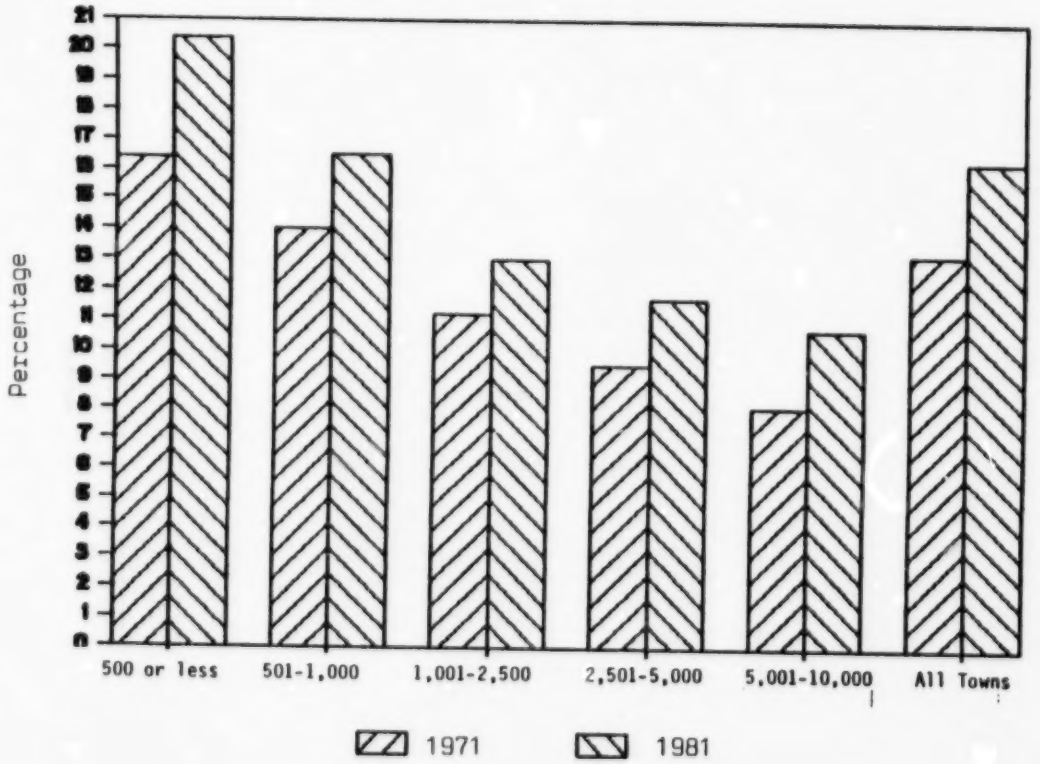
Population of Town	CANADA		B.C.		ALBERTA		SASK.		MANITOBA		ONTARIO	
	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981
500 or less	16.4	20.4	7.1	5.9	14.6	20.4	18.2	23.0	18.7	26.1	17.6	19.8
501 - 1,000	14.0	16.5	9.4	11.2	15.2	16.2	17.3	23.1	19.9	26.7	16.2	19.7
1,001 - 2,500	11.2	13.0	7.4	8.7	11.2	10.9	17.4	20.4	17.0	19.8	15.2	18.0
2,501 - 5,000	9.5	11.7	8.3	10.6	11.3	10.3	15.5	17.4	16.8	21.7	11.6	14.2
5,001 - 10,000	8.1	10.7	8.2	10.4	9.2	7.8	12.7	13.7	10.8	13.4	10.6	12.8
ALL TOWNS	13.2	16.3	8.0	9.6	13.9	15.8	17.9	22.6	18.2	23.6	16.0	17.2

Population of Town	QUEBEC		NEW BRUNSWICK		P.E.I.		NOVA SCOTIA		NEWFOUNDLAND	
	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981
500 or less	13.2	14.5	11.6	15.5	16.1	17.8	--	--	15.6	9.2
501 - 1,000	11.3	13.3	11.2	12.1	8.7	13.1	21.7	19.1	9.4	10.8
1,001 - 2,500	8.9	11.3	9.3	10.9	11.7	10.4	12.7	16.8	6.3	7.2
2,501 - 5,000	6.9	7.8	10.7	10.9	3.1	--	10.9	14.5	6.3	8.0
5,001 - 10,000	5.9	9.3	5.6	8.8	9.4	11.0	10.8	12.7	4.0	5.9
ALL TOWNS	9.5	12.6	10.2	11.9	12.4	14.5	11.9	15.2	7.1	8.9

Source: Census of Canada

Population 65+ by Town Size

Canada 1971 and 1981



The Age of the Small Town Elderly

The elderly are not an homogeneous group, as they will be quick to point out. Not least, they differ by age just as any group of people do who cover a 30-year or more age span. With the elderly there is the tendency for increasing age to bring greater frailty and the need for more support from family and community. It is customary, therefore, to divide the over-65 group into three groups in order to better assess their conditions and needs. Sometimes, they are called 'the old' (65-74), the 'old old' (75-84), and the 'very old' (85 years and older). There is one further age group for whom it is useful to gather data, the 'young old', those from 55-64 years. The latter group provides the immediate source for the over-65 population; their size, mobility, etc. play a large part in determining the growth of the elderly in the succeeding decade.

In general, we are interested in knowing whether small towns are favoured by, say, one elderly age group. Are towns and villages places for the 'very old'. Do the 'young old' stay there? and so forth. Table 9 reports the Canada-wide situation for 1971 and 1981. Several of its findings deserve mention:

first, the proportion in each elderly age group in small towns as a whole exceeds that for Canada in both 1971 and 1981;

second, the proportion of the 65-74 and 75-84 age groups increased in small towns from 1971 to 1981 and the other two age groups remained constant;

third, these trends are found in all sizes of small towns with only a few minor exceptions.

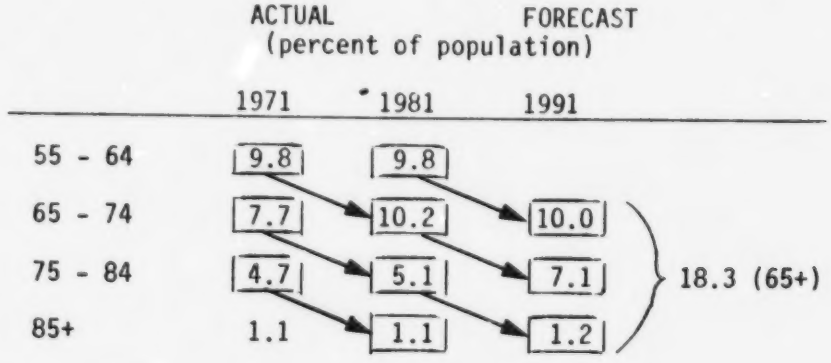
There are, thus, relatively more elderly people of all age groups in small towns than in the nation as a whole. Newfoundland is the one province where the reverse is true: British Columbia and New Brunswick have very similar age group distributions to that of Canada. The remaining seven provinces exceed the Canadian norm by anywhere from 25-50 percent. Manitoba and Saskatchewan small towns also have substantially higher proportions of the 'old old' (75-84) and 'very old' (85+), and lower proportions of the 'young-old'. Fewer 'young old' (55-64) are also found in Ontario and Nova Scotia small towns.

TABLE 9: CHANGING AGE STRUCTURES OF THE ELDERLY POPULATIONS OF CANADIAN SMALL TOWNS, 1971-1981

Population of Town	Percentage of Town Population							
	55-64yrs		65-74yrs		75-84yrs		85+ yrs	
	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981
500 or less	11.7	11.7	9.7	12.5	5.4	6.4	1.3	1.5
501 - 1,000	9.8	9.5	8.1	10.2	4.7	5.2	1.2	1.1
1,001 - 2,500	8.6	8.5	6.5	8.3	3.7	3.9	1.0	0.8
2,501 - 5,000	8.1	8.0	5.6	7.5	3.1	3.5	0.9	0.7
5,001 -10,000	7.7	8.1	4.9	7.0	2.5	3.0	0.7	0.7
ALL TOWNS	9.8	9.8	7.7	10.2	4.7	5.1	1.1	1.1
CANADA	8.0	8.9	5.0	6.0	2.5	2.8	0.6	0.8

Source: Census of Canada

From these age group data for 1971 and 1981 one can generate an estimate of 1991 proportions of seniors in small towns by allowing each group to 'age' through successive decades, as follows:



While this forecast cannot be considered to be precise, it seems quite clear that seniors will comprise an even greater share of small town populations in 1991 than they did a decade earlier -- perhaps 18% as compared with 16% in 1981. Their numbers will also grow if total small town populations also grow in this period, which certainly one would expect from the trends of recent decades. The degree to which the elderly stay in or move into, small towns will be crucial factors in the future numbers of small town seniors. This issue will be addressed later in this report when the mobility of the elderly is examined.

Male/Female Characteristics

Two tendencies can affect the incidence of males and females among the elderly in small towns. One is the higher outmigration of women from rural regions due to fewer job opportunities. The other is the natural longevity of women. On the one hand, one would expect that small towns would have proportionately more men than women and, on the other, that among older people there would be more women than men. In general, the findings of this study conform to these expectations.

Using an index of the number of males per 100 females one finds small town populations have a greater share of men than is the case with the nation as a whole. Indeed, the ratio exceeds 100 which means that there are also more males than females on average in small towns, the opposite to that of cities. Among the elderly of small towns there are more women than men, however, the proportion of men is higher than in cities or the nation (see Table 10). Small towns also have been witnessing declining sex ratios among the elderly (i.e: fewer men) but at a lesser rate than in cities. Elderly men are 20-30 percent more numerous in small towns than in cities, even in the oldest age group (85+).

When looked at by size of small towns, the above tendencies prevail but with some interesting variations. Men in the 65-74 age group exceed their female cohorts in towns up to 1,000; and those 75-84 exceed similarly aged women in towns between 500 and 2,500. However, men over 85 years are significantly less numerous than women over 85 in towns below 1,000 population.

TABLE 10: SEX RATIOS AMONG ELDERLY POPULATIONS IN CANADIAN SMALL TOWNS, 1971-1981

Population of Town	Males per 100 Females							
	55-64yrs		65-74yrs		75-84yrs		85+ yrs	
	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981	1971	1981
500 or less	96.9	94.8	100.0	103.1	91.7	89.1	46.2	39.7
501 - 1,000	109.8	103.0	116.7	105.9	104.7	96.4	66.1	53.4
1,001 - 2,500	113.4	97.2	106.7	97.3	110.5	100.9	81.7	69.1
2,501 - 5,000	99.9	92.2	97.9	89.7	99.9	86.5	88.9	81.4
5,001 - 10,000	97.6	91.8	84.7	84.8	81.1	81.8	81.3	77.8
ALL TOWNS	10..8	96.9	101.8	99.6	97.7	93.2	76.5	62.6
CANADA	97.3	91.4	87.1	83.4	74.2	66.5	65.9	48.9

Source: Census of Canada

By province, the proportion of men over 85 is substantially higher in Manitoba and Saskatchewan small towns, while the converse is true in Prince Edward Island, Quebec, and Newfoundland. British Columbia and Alberta towns have higher proportions of men 65-74 and 75-84 than in most other provinces. The 'young old' (55-64) sex ratios are higher in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, British Columbia, and Prince Edward Island. In general, Ontario and Nova Scotia small towns have proportionately fewer elderly men than in the towns in most other provinces.

Overview on the Small Town Elderly

The preceding statistics can be summarized to provide a concise picture of the small town elderly.

1. Small towns have much higher proportions of their populations over 65 years of age;

2. The proportion of persons over 65 has been increasing in small towns in almost all provinces;

3. Towns with less than 1,000 population have the highest proportions of persons 65 and over, and these shares have been growing faster among small towns;

4. The proportion of all three elderly age groups has been growing in small towns;

5. There are proportionately more men among the small town elderly than in cities, especially in towns under 2,500 and particularly in the Western provinces.

4. MOBILITY OF THE SMALL TOWN ELDERLY

Preceding sections have established firmly the strong and continued presence of the elderly in small towns in Canada. But population numbers alone do not reveal whether the elderly have always lived in the small towns or have recently moved there. And, if the latter, where they might have moved from. Data are available from the Census that will allow us to pursue these questions and others.

The 1981 Census asked of people: 'did you live in your present home in 1976?' Those that answered yes are termed "non-movers"; those that answered no are termed "movers". Among those who moved their dwellings are

those who simply moved within the same town as well as those who moved into the town from elsewhere. The latter are called 'in-migrants' and knowing where they previously lived allows us to know the sources of elderly growth. Of course, in-migrants to one town represent 'out-migrants' from some other place; thus we may also know which towns are losing elderly populations.

General Mobility Tendencies

Canadians in general, between 1976 and 1981, had a high propensity to change dwellings. Almost half of them moved in this period (Table 11). This rate of movement represents the equivalent of each person moving once every 10 years. By contrast, the rate of movement of people in the United States in a similar period was 50 percent higher (Dahmann, 1986). Of the 10.6 million Canadians who moved between 1976 and 1981, just over one half moved within the same municipality. The remainder migrated either from a nearby area, another province, or from abroad. The resultant migration rate for the nation for 1976-1981 was, thus, 22.7 percent, a rise from the 16 percent rate for the 1971-1976 period (Field, 1981).

Small town populations, by comparison, showed less tendency to change dwellings than those living elsewhere in Canada; only 42 percent moved in the 1976-1981 period. On the other hand, small towns had a higher migration rate than did the nation. That is, of those who occupied new dwellings, more had moved from outside than had moved within the town. When one also notes the high rate of out-migration from small towns, it is clear their populations are far from stationary. However, as the rest of the table shows, these high rates of mobility derive mostly from the younger populations: the small town elderly are much more sedentary.

The elderly living in small towns moved their residence only about half as frequently as other small town dwellers. This means that nearly 80 percent of the elderly remained in their own homes through the 1976-1981 period. Of those who moved, more than half just shifted between dwellings in the same town; the rest had moved into the town from outside. Table 11 also shows that among the three age groups of the small town elderly the migration rate decreases with age: the older people get the less tendency they have to move into or out of the community. There is a small increase in the rate of changing dwellings among the very old, those 85 and over, probably as they move to shelter care facilities.

TABLE 11: MOBILITY TENDENCIES OF THE SMALL TOWN ELDERLY, IN CANADA, 1976-1981

Small Town Population Group	Percent of Population				
		Movers		Migrants	
	Non-Movers	Total	Within Town	In-Migrants	Out-Migrants
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)	(5)
All Ages	57.8	42.2	18.4	23.8	38.6
All 65+	78.4	21.6	11.0	10.6	17.9
55 - 64	76.8	23.2	7.3	15.9	19.4
65 - 74	77.0	23.0	11.5	11.5	18.9
75 - 84	80.2	19.2	10.7	8.5	14.5
85+	79.1	20.9	12.3	8.6	9.5
CANADA*	52.4	47.6	24.1	22.7	22.7

Source: Census of Canada

Notes: Column (1) + (2) = 100.0

Column (2) = Column (3) + (4)

*For total Canadian Population Over 5 years

Mobility of Small Town Elderly

In Canada 1976-1981

Special note needs to be taken of the migration patterns of the 55-64 age group, the young-old. Nearly 77 percent of this group did not move from their homes between 1976 and 1981. However, of those that had acquired a new residence, two-thirds had moved to the town from another location. At the same time, the young-old had a slightly higher rate of out migration than other elderly groups, indeed they are the most mobile of the seniors. Three tendencies of this group bode well for a continued strong presence of elderly in small towns: first, the low rate of movers among the 55-64 olds; second, the attraction of the young-old to small towns as in-migrants; and third, their relatively small negative net migration rate (in-migrants minus out-migrants).

Lastly, a brief look at the male and female characteristics of elderly migrants is warranted. In general, women are slightly more mobile among the small town elderly than men. They comprise a larger proportion of the stream of elderly movers, in-migrants, and out-migrants into, out of, and within small towns. These tendencies are also slightly more marked in the provinces from Ontario and east.

Provincial Tendencies

Mobility of the small town elderly differs among the provinces (Table 12). In towns in British Columbia, Alberta, Prince Edward Island, Ontario, and Manitoba there are above-average rates of elderly in-migrants while in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, and Nova Scotia the rates are notably below average. The same holds true for movers among the elderly. British Columbia towns also have the highest rates of out-migration among the elderly as well as those with the greatest propensity to change dwellings. Out-migration is prominent in Saskatchewan towns, too, but not, interestingly, in Manitoba towns. The latter province, indeed, had a positive flow of elderly migrants to its towns; Prince Edward Island was the only other province to experience more inflow than outflow among its small town elderly. Overall, the three western provinces have the most mobile small town seniors while those of the provinces of the Atlantic Region are the least mobile.

TABLE 12: PROVINCIAL DIFFERENCES IN THE MOBILITY OF THE SMALL TOWN ELDERLY IN CANADA, 1976-1981

Province	Percent of Population over 65			
	Movers		Migrants	
	Total	Within Town	In-Migrants	Out-Migrants
	(1)	(2)	(3)	(4)
British Columbia	30.4	15.0	15.4	31.8
Alberta	25.0	11.5	13.5	18.8
Saskatchewan	19.0	9.7	9.3	23.8
Manitoba	24.0	12.5	11.5	8.8
Ontario	23.5	12.4	12.1	13.9
Quebec	21.2	11.3	9.9	16.8
New Brunswick	18.0	10.4	7.6	9.6
Nova Scotia	20.7	13.1	7.6	7.8
Prince Edward Island	22.6	10.9	11.7	11.4
Newfoundland	12.8	6.9	5.9	8.6
CANADA*	21.6	11.0	10.6	17.9

Source: Census of Canada

Notes: Column (1) = Column (2) + (3)

*For all Canadian small towns

Origins of Elderly In-Migrants

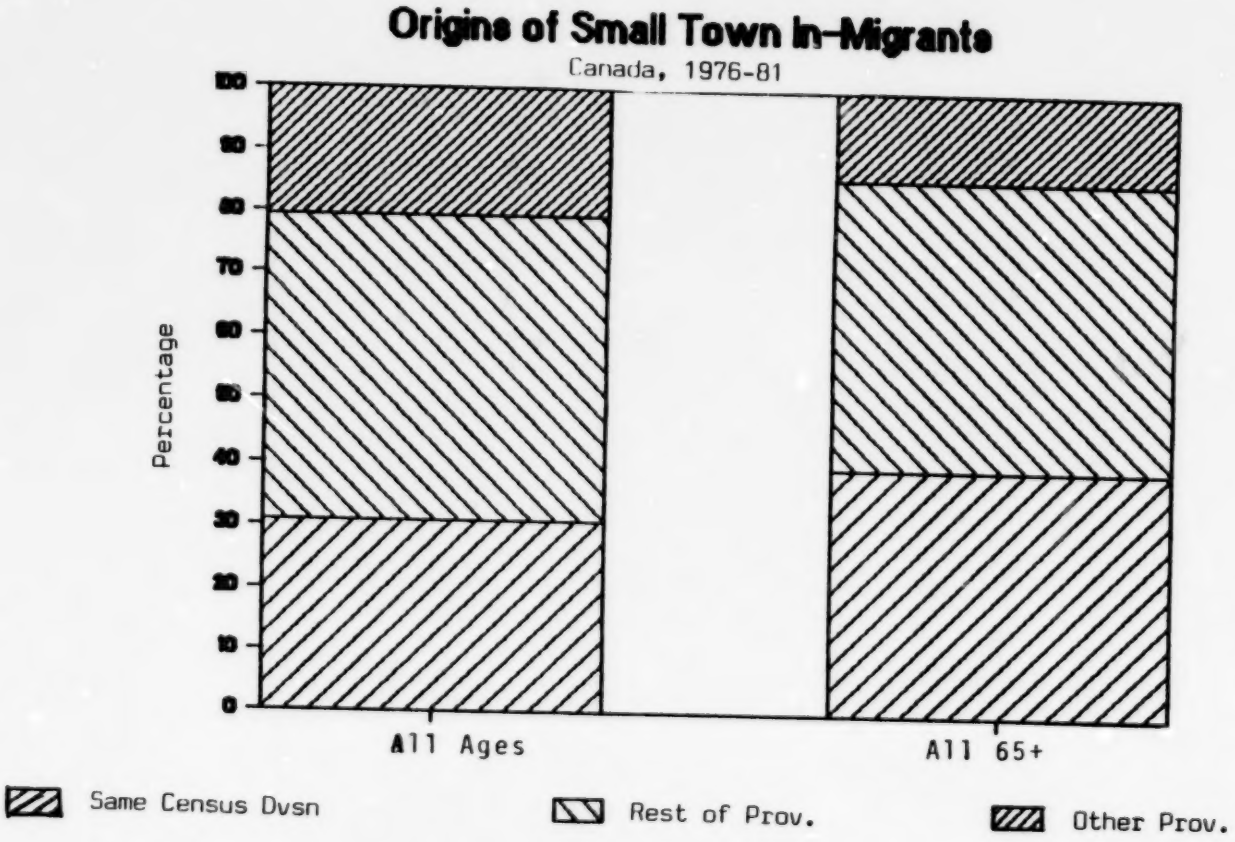
Three major sources of in-migrants to the elderly populations of small towns may be identified from the Census. The first is seniors who move in from the region about the town, as for example, farmers retiring to the town. These data are reported for the Census Division (county, regional district, regional municipality) in which the town is located. The second source of in-migrants is seniors from other parts of the same province beyond the town's Census Division, and the third is from other provinces. (The inflow of elderly from abroad into small towns is very small and need not enter into our calculations). Table 13 reports on the proportions of elderly in-migrants who originate from these three sources.

TABLE 13: ORIGINS OF ELDERLY IN-MIGRANTS TO SMALL TOWNS IN CANADA, 1976-1981

Small Town Population Group	Percent of Elderly In-Migrants From: Same Census Div.	Rest of Province	Other Province	Total
All Ages	30.7	48.7	20.6	100.0 (23.8)*
All 65+	39.6	46.3	14.1	100.0 (10.6)
55 - 64	46.0	43.3	10.7	100.0 (15.9)
65 - 74	37.9	49.3	13.8	100.0 (11.6)
75 - 84	47.1	40.0	12.9	100.0 (8.5)
85+	40.7	45.3	14.0	100.0 (8.6)

Source: Census of Canada

Notes: *percentage of age group who are In-Migrants


Origins of Small Town In-Migrants
Canada, 1976-81
Percentage
0
10
20
30
40
50
60
70
80
90
100
All Ages
All 65+
Same Census Dvsn
Rest of Prov.
Other Prov.

Looking at all small town elderly over 65, of those who moved into the community between 1976 and 1981, 40 percent came from the same general locale, probably from within 50 miles. A further 46 percent moved from elsewhere in the same province. Less than 15 percent moved into small towns from another province. Restating this, 85 percent or more of the elderly who migrated to a small town in Canada in the 1976-1981 period previously resided in the same province as the town, and nearly one-half of them came from the same locale. Inter-provincial migration of the elderly is not very extensive. There are only slight variations in these tendencies among the different elderly age groups.

It is possible to probe behind the above 1976-1981 mobility trends to determine differences between provinces and sizes of towns. Almost uniformly, towns of less than 500 population received the smallest proportions of elderly in-migrants regardless of source and regardless of province. These towns were not highly favoured for the elderly to move into; towns of 1,000 to 5,000 were the most favoured. The very old (85+) migrants preferred the largest towns. The towns of the four Western provinces plus Ontario and Prince Edward Island received the highest proportions of elderly moving in from the locale of the town. The same provinces also had high proportions of elderly moving in from elsewhere in their own provinces. British Columbia and Alberta small towns (and to a limited extent Prince Edward Island) received the highest proportions of elderly migrants from other provinces. This was true for all age groups of the elderly. The size of town these inter-provincial migrants preferred was in the 2,500 - 5,000 range. The Atlantic provinces (excluding PEI) and Quebec towns had low rates of in-migration in all the categories indicating both that their elderly tend to 'stay put' and that few elderly were attracted from other provinces.

To conclude this discussion of in-migrants it will be useful to provide a sense of scale. It will be remembered that only about ten percent -- 10.6 percent to be precise -- of the elderly actually moved into towns from another location. This amounts to about 65,000 persons over 65 years of age were migrating between communities in Canada. As we have seen, about 40 percent, or 25,000, moved from nearby areas and a slightly higher number moved from elsewhere in the same province. Inter-provincial migration involved only about 10,000 elderly persons in the 1976-1981 period. It is the medium size towns which received most from this flow.

Destinations of Elderly Out-Migrants

In the same time period as elderly people are moving into small towns other are moving out of them: the latter are out-migrants. Their destinations are likely diverse. While some may move into other small towns, others may move to the city, and so forth. The census data for 1976-1981 are rendered in Table 14 to allow a partial picture of the destinations of elderly out-migrants from small towns; unfortunately, the data do not permit us to know types of places to which the elderly migrated.

TABLE 14: DESTINATIONS OF ELDERLY OUT-MIGRANTS FROM SMALL TOWNS IN CANADA, 1976-1981

Small Town Population Group	Percent of Elderly Out-Migrants To: Same Census Div.	Rest of Province	Other Province	Total
All Ages	30.6	49.0	20.4	100.0 (38.6)*
All 65+	38.3	44.7	17.0	100.0 (17.9)
55 - 64	44.3	34.6	21.1	100.0 (19.4)
65 - 74	39.4	44.3	16.3	100.0 (18.9)
75 - 84	41.1	46.0	12.9	100.0 (14.5)
85+	34.9	47.9	17.2	100.0 (9.5)

Source: Census of Canada

Notes: * Percent of age groups who are out-migrants

When the elderly leave small towns, over 80 percent stay within the same province. Almost 40 percent move to another community within the same census division, that is, within 50-100 miles, while about 45 percent move elsewhere in the province. Just over 15 percent migrate to other

provinces. Interestingly, the very old age group is most likely to move further afield, including to other provinces, and less likely to remain in their own locale. This is comparable to the migration patterns of the younger age groups in the population. The 55-64 young-old group, on the other hand shows the greatest propensity to migrate the shortest distance. Just as the smallest small towns are not the most favoured for the elderly to move into, those places with populations of less than 500 also have the highest rates of out-migration. The elderly who move from these towns tend to move to other communities in the same locale or in the same province. Those seniors over 75 years move mostly from towns over 500 population. It is interesting to note that the provinces whose towns experience the largest in-migration of the elderly -- the four Western provinces and Ontario -- also evidence to largest outflows of seniors. Their destinations cover all three possibilities.

Further, the Western provinces, with the exception of British Columbia, have the highest proportions of seniors in their small towns and the strongest migration tendencies, both inflows and outflows, among their senior citizen residents. The converse applies to those provinces, especially in the Atlantic region, with lesser proportions of the elderly in small towns. These contrasting tendencies would, perhaps, require detailed study at the individual community level in order to understand the migration choices of seniors reflected in these data.

Netting Out the Mobility Trends

It remains to pull together the several facets of the picture of the mobility of the small town elderly that are presented above. To do this, we shall look, first, at the inflow and outflow components of migration and, then, at the net results, the net migration, of these flows. It will be remembered that the data allow us to determine the degree to which the elderly living in small towns are mobile in moving within towns and into and out of towns. The first general conclusion to state, based on the 1976-1981 experience, is that:

***The population over 65 in small towns is only one-half as mobile as other small town dwellers or other Canadians. About 10 percent move within their own towns and only about 10 percent are recent in-migrants.

Inflows. Looking now at the inflow of the elderly (Table 11), the in-migration rate, it is also about one-half of the Canadian rate in this period, a finding which parallels that of Field (1981) for the preceding five-year period, 1971-1976, for all elderly Canadians. Migration rates are up by about 25 percent for all people in Canada in the second half of the 1970s, and they are also up for the elderly by the same degree. Within the broad elderly category there are some migration differences related to age:

***The 65-74 age group of the elderly are the most mobile with rates of moving and in-migration about one-third higher than older age groups in small towns.

The young-old, 55-64, are the most mobile among older people in small towns with a rate of in-migration 1976-1981 that is 50 percent higher than for those more senior in age.

These in-migration rates provide an index of the permanence of the elderly who reside in small towns. Thus one can say:

***About 90 percent of the population over 65 in small towns have roots extending back more than five years.

Sometimes, this sort of tendency is referred to as the Pull, or force of attraction, of a place. Small towns, clearly, are able to draw and hold elderly populations. Seniors are also more stable than younger segments of small town populations. The strong in-migration rate of the 55-64 year olds confirms the attraction of small towns for older people and the continued presence of the over-65 group.

Outflows. The outflow of population, out-migration, is sometimes said to reflect the Push, or force of expulsion, from a place. Field (1981) found for 1971-1976 that the smaller the centre the higher the push on its population. In general, the same can be said for small towns in the 1976-1981 period (see Table 11):

***The out-migration rate for all segments of a small town's population is up to 70 percent higher than for other types of settlement in Canada.

Having said all that, the intensity of the push factor is not the same for all sizes of small towns. The smallest towns, 500 or less in population, have substantially higher rates of out-migration for all age groups, young as well as old. Above 500 in population the out-migration rate is much reduced from this high level, running only about 25-50 percent above the national average, and differences between sizes of centres is less pronounced. (The net migration rates shown in Table 15, to be referred to below, bear this out as well.) Regarding the elderly and the push factor:

***All age groups of the elderly have a greater tendency to move away from small towns than to migrate to them and this tendency is significantly higher in towns less than 500 in population.

One caveat is required regarding the very old: those over 85 have the lowest rates of out-migration and size of centre is not related to these seniors in any regular way.

Net Flows. The extent to which the rate of inflow of population differs from the outflow is called the net migration rate. When outflows are greater than inflows, as noted above for the elderly, net migration is negative in value. That is, the push factor is greater than the pull factor for the elderly. However, it is important to know both the level of net migration as well as whether it is positive or negative. Table 15 arrays net migration rates for all age groups of the elderly in small towns (and for the total town population) for different sizes of centre.

A review of the net migration rates in this table, reveals that most of the rates are low, averaging about 3 percent or less of the particular age group. While most of the rates are negative, and thus reflect more outflow than inflow of the elderly, several are positive such as those of the 55-64 and 85+ age groups. Since our data show the propensity of the elderly to either move into or out of small towns, these low rates indicate that those who leave are almost replaced (if negative) or more than replaced (if positive) by other elderly moving in. Towns below 500 population are the main exception to this and have, as we noted above, much more outflow than inflow of the elderly (places of 500 - 1,000 are similarly affected in regard to the 75-84 year old group).

***Elderly residents of small towns who migrate show a strong tendency to move to other small towns.

TABLE 15: NET MIGRATION RATES FOR ELDERLY AGE GROUPS IN DIFFERENT-SIZE CANADIAN SMALL TOWNS, 1976-1981

Population of Town	Net Migration Rates (Percent of Age Groups)				
	All Ages	55-64	65-74	75-84	85+
500 or less	-31.2	-10.0	-19.4	-11.8	-0.2
501 - 1,000	-11.6	- 1.7	- 1.7	- 8.1	-3.4
1,000 - 2,500	- 6.5	0.4	- 3.1	- 1.9	-2.7
2,501 - 5,000	- 2.9	0.0	- 1.7	- 0.5	1.9
5,001 -10,000	- 3.2	- 1.4	- 2.5	- 0.4	-2.5
All Towns	-14.8	- 3.5	- 7.2	- 6.0	-0.9

Source: Census of Canada

In this case, the net migration data also indicate the degree to which the elderly move to other types of settlements such as to cities or the countryside. It can be seen that the very old tend to stay mostly within the small town milieu, although they may move between different size towns. The small town 55-64 group also have a low propensity to move to other environments; the elderly from 65-84 have the greatest tendency to move away from small towns altogether.

Lastly, these net migration data have important implications for the continuation of small towns as retirement havens for the elderly. Given the already strong tendency for the small town elderly not to move (about 75 percent on average), those that do move are mostly replaced, as the low net migration rates show. The smallest towns remain vulnerable, however, to outmigration of the 65-74 age group in particular. Not all provinces are likely to be equally affected: those towns under 500 in Newfoundland, New Brunswick, Quebec, Saskatchewan, and British Columbia will likely have

the largest proportion of elderly moving out. They will continue to attract elderly in-migrants, but will experience large outflows as well. Other size towns, in general, should achieve a balance of elderly migrants. Thus:

***Towns over 500 population will increasingly become the major retirement centres in rural regions.

5. SMALL TOWN ENVIRONMENTS AND THE NEEDS OF THE ELDERLY

The foregoing sections have established that small towns in Canada are the environments that many elderly people are choosing to live in. Further, the data indicate no diminution of this tendency over, at least, the next decade or so. This is not a new situation and it has been recognized in many rural regions of Canada that meeting the needs of elderly residents poses a number of important problems. A review of reports about these problems helps to reveal the implications for providing shelter and services for those choosing small towns and rural areas in which to spend their retirement years.

Four main problem areas reassert themselves from place to place as requiring solutions to improve the quality of life of the rural and small town elderly:

1. Health care services,
2. Home support services including companionship,
3. Home maintenance services,
4. Transportation.

This list does not differ from one that might be compiled for seniors living in cities, the difference lies, however, in the physical geographical context of small towns and rural areas. All these problem situations are affected by the small town context which one may characterize as having small numbers (of both caregivers and clients), few alternative sources (of services, facilities and transportation), and large distances to be

travelled (to obtain or to deliver services). As one Ontario report notes, "the nature of social service provision is necessarily different and often strained in rural areas" (Ontario, 1980).

A typical situation of many rural senior citizens is profiled in a Saskatchewan study:

> ...widowed women living alone (in a village or hamlet) on a low income who are over 75 years of age and who need help with shopping and other routine daily activities... who usually don't drive, don't have a taxi service available to them and don't use the commercial bus lines... who are likely to feel lonely and dissatisfied with life and don't have enough contact with a close friend... and are more likely to describe their health as 'fair' or 'poor'.
> (Senior Citizens' Provincial Council, 1982)

Personal situations among the elderly are diverse, of course. But this type of profile shows the complex of variables -- health, age, ability to drive, other transport, size of community, presence of friends, etc. -- that enter into the picture of small town life for the elderly. Medical and nursing facilities, for example, are usually located on a hierarchical basis, with the main ones found in cities and only the largest towns having a clinic or intermediate care facility. Thus, access is often difficult for seniors without adequate transportation who live in more isolated situations. In Prince Edward Island, a study of seniors reported that 40 percent of the elderly rated their health as 'fair' or 'poor' and about 27 percent either did not own a car or were unable to drive. (Prince Edward Island, 1981).

Most studies cite difficulties for rural and small town seniors in a wide variety of mundane tasks in and about their own homes (which usually accounts for about three-quarters of the rural elderly). Home care needs, ranging from preparing meals to personal care and friendly visiting, and home maintenance services to assist with yardwork, repairs, and housekeeping are recurring items of concern from Ontario to Alberta (Cf., Peterborough, 1985; Provost and District, 1982). It can be readily appreciated that rural areas pose special problems of organization and delivery of these more informal services. Even where such assistance does exist, it is frequently noted that there is lack of adequate information about what is available and that the elderly and their families and friends often feel frustrated, as a British Columbia study notes (SPARC, 1976).

Quite simply, the challenge in providing services for the elderly in rural areas and small towns is one of matching up a meager array of services with a population living in small clusters widely spread over the countryside. Or, put another way, it is a matter of dealing with the interrelated factors of mobility (of both the elderly clients and the service providers) and accessibility of the elderly (in both a physical and informational sense). A useful categorization of the issues which must be addressed is provided in an Ontario study of long term care needs (Mark, 1983):

1. increasing the mobility of the elderly to services and facilities;
2. increasing the mobility of needed services;
3. achieving accessibility by minimizing travel to services and facilities;

The first of these, increasing the mobility of the elderly, involves removing much of the burden of transportation from the elderly or their families. Lack of a personal car, inability to drive, difficulty of driving in inclement weather conditions, reliance on others to drive, and no bus or taxi, are conditions that affect a very large proportion of the small town elderly at one time or another. The provision of collective transportation options is the key to this dilemma. Many forms have been suggested (eg: shared or subsidized taxi service, car pools, dial-a-bus, volunteer driver system, fixed route van service), but their implementation must fit the needs and resources of the community and nature of the elderly.

The second issue, making services more mobile, involves transferring the burden of transportation from the elderly to the service. Many communities have services that are delivered to the homes of the elderly (eg: meals on wheels, homemakers, nursing services, friendly visiting). Both agencies and volunteer program face the problem of meeting transportation costs of people and vehicles.

Minimizing travel to services and facilities, the third issue, may involve reducing travel by both the elderly and care givers. The decentralization of services from large centres to small centres is one option that can be followed. This may take a number of forms such as establishing new facilities, employing mobile facilities, or arranging for caregivers to visit local centres on a regular basis. These approaches would help to minimize the need for the elderly to find transportation and, in many

instances, even to be able to walk to services. Providing informational access to services is a second option to link seniors to those who could provide assistance in home support, home maintenance, community services, and transportation.

A problematic feature of each of these approaches is the degree of organization required to make them work. Local resources and skills may be in short supply in many small towns in order to initiate and sustain the necessary arrangements. Yet, as difficult as it may be, it is vital that locally-based approaches be encouraged and nurtured. Equally important is that any organization function as a co-ordinating mechanism for services and aim to overcome the insularity which often characterizes efforts to assist the elderly, even in small towns.

Lastly, the growing number and the aging of the elderly population in small towns requires a consideration of seniors' housing needs. Not infrequently, out of preference or out of need, elderly people seek designated senior citizen housing for the security and social milieu it provides. Where such housing exists, it often provides the only alternative type of accommodation for the elderly in a small town and usually has a waiting list. Other options need to be explored such as congregate housing and home-sharing. Careful attention should be given to the location of designated senior citizen housing so as to facilitate walking access to shops and services (Hodge, 1987). An essential, and often overlooked, element is the design of services to complement the shelter being provided. Given the meager supply of both shelter and services for the elderly in small towns, it is important to plan for their provision jointly.

* * * * * * * * * * *

There seems every likelihood that, by 1991, there will be over one million elderly living in Canada's small towns. That is, over 200,000 more than lived there in 1981. The impacts will, of course, vary from community to community. Some may see only small increases in seniors while others are sought out as retirement havens. The towns with fewer than 1,000 residents will probably continue to be home to the largest proportions of the elderly. These places, in turn, are the ones with the fewest services and housing options as well as demand the greatest amount of travelling for seniors. The growing number of elderly in small towns calls for a more concerted effort to assure a supportive environment for small town seniors. Innovative solutions will be called for to provide for their needs in these small scale situations. Moreover, the efforts will demand co-operation of local and provincial governments, voluntary agencies, community groups, and seniors themselves.

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**For an extensive listing of materials regarding the Canadian rural elderly see:

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